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ABSTRACT

Designed to simplify the task of selecting the right reading materials for students, this guide provides a method for structuring the work of textbook selection committees. It guides committees through a six-step process involving answering the following increasingly specific questions: what is the socioeconomic background of the students? What do the students need to be taught? Who are the resource people available, and how will they be used? Which books meet our general needs? Do the component parts of the program assist with classroom organization? Which books should we adopt? For each step of the process, the guide provides a rationale for taking the step, outlines procedures for obtaining the necessary information, and includes worksheets to be used in collecting and evaluating data. (GT)

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HOW TO SELECT ELEMENTARY READING PROGRAMS

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HOW TO SELECT ELEMENTARY READING PROGRAMS

In many states the process of selecting new textbooks consumes hours of time every few years as committees review new editions and choose one or two programs to replace the old. Choosing a reading program, like deciding what to have for dinner, involves selecting from a multitude of possibilities. The first guide to materials for reading instruction published by ERIC described 10,000 items (Harris, 1968). A year later, a supplementary list of 6,000 items was issued (Berridge and Harris, 1969). Obviously, not all these 16,000 were complete reading systems of the type usually selected as the main component of an elementary school reading program. Nevertheless, the number and complexity of available materials thwarts any attempt to assess all the choices.

Almost no guidelines for textbook selection are provided by teacher training institutions beyond platitudes about selecting the right book for the individual child. It is true that well designed procedures for selecting appropriate texts do exist and are available for in-service sessions. These include Right to Read Assessment and Planning Handbook (1974) and the publications of the Educational Products Information Exchange. It is also true that a rapidly expanding body of information on effective teaching is at last beginning to emerge. These proven guidelines for skillfully organizing the classroom and delivering instruction should influence the choice of books and supplementary materials and enhance more traditional guidelines for selecting materials.

How to Select Elementary Reading Programs attempts to simplify the complicated and crucial task of selecting the right materials for the students

in your school. To select materials that function as sharp and forceful teaching tools, you must answer at least these six questions:

1. What is the background of the students who attend our school?
2. What do the students need to be taught?
3. Who are the resource people available, and how will they be used?
4. Which books meet our general needs?
5. Do the component parts assist with classroom organization?
6. Which books should we adopt?

Answering these six questions guides the selection committee through increasingly specific decisions. Each section of this guide consists of a brief rationale for taking that step, and a guide for getting the necessary information. For the first five steps the committee will be asked to collect pertinent facts, to interpret these facts and to reach a tentative conclusion. These conclusions are then shared with users who participate in the final selection. An example illustrates all the steps to show how the process actually works as the six pieces of information and the summary statements combine and lead to a decision.

This guide will serve its purpose if it simplifies the selection process and saves teacher time while providing a method for structuring the work of the committee in search of the right books for a given group of students.

Step I. What is the background of the students who attend our schools?

A general picture of the background of the students in relation to the national average will assist in making the first overall judgement about books. To get this global but useful picture of students in the school, request a profile of parent income and education from the central administrative office. In all cases use reports already available. Consider reports prepared for state or federal funding agencies, or the reports prepared by principals for the State Department of Education. Any report dealing with socio-economic status of parents in your attendance area will suffice. These reports may list percent of single parent families, percent of parents receiving public assistance, percent of children receiving free lunches.

These reports will be used to make rough comparisions between schools in any district, as well as comparisons with the national average. Major textbook publishers, hoping for large volume sales, construct books for the middle 50 or 60 percent of students in the United States. Modifications must be made for the 20 percent who are above and below this middle group. Some schools, however, may find a majority of the students coming from affluent, educated parents. In other schools, a majority of parents may have little formal education. For either of these kinds of schools, most of the books need to be exceptional—above or below the level suggested by the publisher. Coleman (1966) argues convincingly that socio-economic status of the parents contributes markedly to school achievement, as do parent attitudes about school. Knowing how parent income and education compare with the national average will help to determine how much modification of average materials will be needed.

In addition to parent income and education from your own school, collect comparisons with other schools in the district, and with the national average. These latter comparative figures may dispell myths about your school. For

example, in a small city where more people were employed by the university than by any other industry, the staff in one school often lamented the status of their "culturally deprived" school. This designation was made based on the following comperative figures:

	Average family income	Percent of persons 25 years or older with four or more years of college.
Our school	$13,861	22.95
Our district	$17,098	35.46
National average	$11,500	17.00

Were these families truly culturally deprived? No one would suggest such a label except in this or comparable cities. Yet because we all see our own town more clearly than we see the average for the nation as a whole, this school in this town bore the label "culturally deprived."

Keep in mind that the first view of students and their families produces an overall image, not a close-up picture. By stepping back to get a panoramic view of any school population in the context of local and national populations, teachers gain a revealing and often startling new look at the familiar and commonplace.

In addition to dollars earned and school years attended by the parents, the age of the students themselves yields broad but crucial cues. As students progress through the grades, the range of achievement widens. It is true that, in first grade, some students will know sounds and letters, will count past one hundred, and will write their own names and those of family members. Others will tremble with fright at the foreign world of books and pencils and tasks to complete. The differences in children demand acknowledgement from the start.

By grade six, however, the class covers a range of six years or more. Clearly, the older the students, the greater the demand for providing books of various difficulties. No one text will suffice for all students.

In conclusion for Step I, find the best, readily available estimate of the socio-economic level of your attendance area, your district and the nation. Use this estimate to get an indication of the level and range of books needed for your students. Be mindful of the ages of the students who will use the books. Use the form on page 6 or adapt it to summaries available to you.

Step I

Background of Our Students

	Average family income	Percent of one-parent families
Our school	$11,689	31
Our district	$11,683	30
National average	$12,500	36

	Percent of persons 18 years or older who have completed four years of high school	Percent of persons 25 years or older who have completed four years of college
Our school	71	23.47
Our district	69	20.18
National average	72	18.00

We will select books for grades one through six

Tentative impressions gained from these facts.

With minor variations our school is typical of the average U.S. school. A traditional series will be O.K. for our middle group. We will need extra books for the most able.

We might examine management systems that allow us to keep track of student progress so the students can begin new books as they learn each component.

Step II. What do the students need to be taught?

The first step in developing the Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) required for all handicapped children is to state yearly objectives for children designated as exceptional. Teachers ask, "Which of all the possible goals of education should be ranked first for Exceptional Student, George?" Selection committees working at Step II ask this question about the total body of students who will be taught. Again, as in Step I, start by collecting available facts, proceed by inspecting the evidence, conclude by reaching a tentative guiding statement.

Start with the goal statements adopted by your district or mandated by the state. For example, Florida developed tests to measure the ability of eleventh grade students to write letters, to supply or to request information, to complete application forms for a job, to determine the main idea from a selection. Who would disagree with these objectives? They appear in scope and sequences for textbooks, in items on achievement tests, and in complaints from employers who contend that high school graduates cannot write a coherent request or complete an application form.

If the minimum competency goals mandated by 39 states are to be reached, the emphasis on functional literacy must be addressed through all the years of school. No structure of regulations and administrative rules imposed at grade twelve, will assure literate high school graduates. Priorities ought to be established in elementary school so that instruction can assist all students to become truly literate.

Some students must spend more time on reading, receive more exact feedback on their writing and apply mathematics concepts to more situations than their peers in order to master needed skills. Admittedly, more time spent on these building blocks of intellect will mean less time for these students to spend

on electives. On the other hand, it is very difficult to pursue most electives or even hobbies in much depth without well-developed fundamental skills. A strong argument can therefore be made for investing the extra time to master these skills so that subsequent elective study will be enhanced.

Certainly, functional literacy for all students looms prominently in the minds of school patrons who seem less sensitive to unchallenged bright students. Teachers, rather than the public, must initiate classes that rouse the senses and prick the imagination of creative students, and thereby yield a rich harvest for both the individual and society. Parenthetically, extra effort with above average students raises the class achievement average more quickly than any other strategy.

Obviously then, even at Step II, as selection committees ask what the students need to be taught several answers emerge—functional literacy for some, a solid foundation for some, vigorous challenge for some, respect and acceptance for all.

To achieve these lofty goals, a more exact description of present student achievement leads to the desired match between students and books. Again the evidence exists, already collected in the files of achievement tests administered periodically in most schools. At this stage in the textbook selection process, try to establish the proportions of students who will require lower level material supplemented by programmed texts, audio tutors or extra workbooks to provide additional practice. What proportion of students fit the average group, and thus the average curriculum? What proportion will make maximum gain only if they work in relatively difficult texts?

Different schools use different means of displaying student achievement. Frequently, the average score of a school or class is converted to a percentile and compared with the scores of the students from the normative sample.

Perhaps you have seen statements in newspapers such as, "The students from Eisenhower Elementary school score at the 46th percentile compared with the national average of the 50th percentile." Even this sweeping comparison suggests that Eisenhower Elementary students' scores are average.

Our present purpose requires more detail. If your school has prepared charts for the school board, the P.T.A., or other groups of patrons showing the range of your students in relation to the average of the nation, go no further. Use these charts to begin to set priorities for groups of students and to outline the range of basic and supplementary materials needed. Even if no elaborate display exists, your district may use computer scoring services. If so, you'll probably find a summary report showing the relationship between the school and the national average. Users of these computer scoring services choose from detailed profiles or condensed summaries. A common summary report ranges in stanines, or units of nine, as in the following example:

Stanine	Normal percentage distribution		Percentage Eisenhower Elementary	
9	4		2	
8	7	23%	3	10%
7	12		5	
6	17		9	
5	20	54%	20	50%
4	17		21	
3	12		20	
2	7	23%	14	40%
1	4		6	

This school has fewer students than might be expected in the above average group, stanines 7, 8 and 9. About 10 out of each hundred, rather than 23 out of each hundred students need advanced work. Since the elementary school has approximately 600 students, about 60 students, roughly 10 per grade are in this category. Perhaps these 10 students could be grouped for intermittent special attention, or innovative teachers could devise special projects which allow greater learning. It may be that use of the library and interclass sharing may be all this advanced group needs. Do keep these students in mind. Don't let them mark time. High expectations are important for all students, particularly able ones.

The average students, stanines 4, 5 and 6, comprise one half the total group, approximately the number one might expect. Books written for the average population will be satisfactory for the majority of the students in this group.

On the other hand, 40 percent of the students fall into the bottom three stanines. This large portion of students requires modification of the average curriculum. A high level of pupil response, of the drill type, yields better results than indirect methods with these students. Additional practice on skills learned assures maintenance and use, rather than forgetting of essential skills.

In this school greater success with these less able students will occur if teachers select a reading program with many suggestions for showing the student how to master portions of the reading process. Don't rely upon these students to draw inferences. Don't choose a program for this school in which the student reads the lesson before the discussion. For the 40 percent of the students who fall in the lower three stanines, the teacher should present or show the correct response, direct the students to give the correct answer, and only then expect the students to read the printed pages. Workbooks should be

directly related to the stories and other reading selections. Additional practice workbooks, film strips, even games, insure the necessary overlearning and review these students need, only if each of these practice materials relates directly to the elements being taught in the main reading books. For these lower achieving students congruence among all the elements of the total reading program becomes a crucial criterion for selection. Teachers can make all these necessary modifications themselves, but they will save themselves hours of work by selecting a program with features to match the needs of the students. If teachers choose the right books and the right instructional techniques throughout all twelve years of school, most students in this group will achieve functional literacy.

If the brief explanation given in this section of the interpretation and use of achievement test summaries has been sufficient to refresh your ability to interpret these tests, you are now ready to develop several guiding statements about your school population. Conversely, if the reports of achievement of the students in your school still seem foreign and unintelligible, or if your school population presents special problems in drawing comparisons with the average population, seek help from someone on the staff of your school, the central office, the Educational Service District, or the representative of the test publisher hired to assist users to become proficient in interpreting test results.

Above all, don't ignore useful information stashed away in file cabinets. Achievement tests were constructed to give valid information about groups of students. School districts spend thousands of dollars on tests and then often fail to use the results. That's a little like buying a dependable car and never taking it out of the garage. Cars can be driven recklessly, just as tests can be interpreted foolishly. When used with care, both cars and achievement tests serve legitimate purposes.

Step II

What Do the Students Need to Be Taught?

When the students complete high school the minimum standards for reading include: (Write in several statements from goals adopted by your school)

1. Prepare a one paragraph summary of a report from a newspaper.

2. Apply capitalization, punctuation and paragraphing to a passage that has none of these.

3. Read and state three conditions of an apartment rental agreement.

4. Use reference materials to obtain information.

Summaries of achievement test scores tell us our students (mark all that apply):

__X__ Are very much like the national average

_____ Are lower than the national average

_____ Are higher than the national average

_____ Have more students at the middle range

__X__ Have more students at the low range

_____ Have more students at the upper end

We should look for:

__X__ More practice and review items for the less able students

__X__ A method that provides direct instruction for the less able students

__X__ A method with high congruence between parts, each teaching the same skills with a little variation, for the less able students

__X__ Suggestions for innovative, creative tasks for the more able students

__X__ A method allowing easy access to more difficult material for the more able students

Step III. Who are the resource people, and how will they be used?

Teaching is as lonely as a leaf clinging to a tree in December if each teacher strives all year to teach the assigned students without help from associates. Fortunately, experienced teachers reach out to new staff members with tips on how to get worksheets duplicated, how to persuade the janitor to move shelves, how to manage recalcitrant Robert.

In Step III, the committee selecting materials lists all the available resource personnel: Other teachers, principal, reading specialist, Title I teacher, team leader, curriculum consultant, resource room teacher, speech pathologist, media specialist, school psychologist, volunteer aides and peer tutors. Some or all of these may be employed to assist teachers in any district. In addition, find out which personnel in the Educational Service District provide direct aid to teachers and schools. Listing the resource people available and the services they can provide suggests how much additional independent seatwork will be needed to supplement instruction from the teacher and support personnel.

It's a strange contradiction, but a well documented one, that most talented teachers use the assistance of available special personnel much more often then less skilled teachers do. Master teachers work closely with resource teachers and systematically add to their own store of teaching techniques. Resource personnel, too, profit from direct, continuing cooperation with classroom teachers. If the resource teachers appear reluctant to concern themselves with day-to-day classroom problems, entice them to become more involved by telling them the results of an Oregon study in which the most successful itinerant reading teachers worked closely with classroom teachers. In this study the less successful reading teachers taught remedial reading with little attempt to help classroom teachers find materials to use in the classroom. Success was measured by increased achievement of the students receiving remedial reading from the

itinerant reading teachers. Obviously, both regular and special teachers reach their goals more quickly when they cooperate closely.

By making a list of resource personnel available and the services they provide, selection committees get a good indication of the materials that must be ordered to carry on all the tasks of teaching: To assess the level of individual students, to plan direct instruction, to plan independent activities for students, and to evaluate whether instruction has been effective. For example, if a Title I teacher can teach the lowest 10 percent of the students for twenty minutes per day, the main concern of the regular teacher will be to assure that both Title I and the regular teacher are working toward the same goals on compatible materials. If no extra resource personnel are available on a regular basis the classroom teacher must plan to provide the additional practice, review and reteaching for these low achieving students. A teacher working alone might look for tutor supplements to structure tutor activities or for additional independent seatwork that reinforces the same skills introduced in the reading group.

A student's active attention to academically oriented seatwork increases Academic Learning Time, which is the amount of time a student spends attending to academic tasks while also performing with a high success rate. The term Academic Learning Time came from a continuing series of classroom observations conducted as part of the Beginning Teacher Evaluation Study conducted by the Commission on Teacher Preparation and Licensing in Sacramento, California (1978). Academic Learning Time includes 1) allocated time, or the amount of time a student actually has available to work on an academic activity, 2) engagement rate, or the percentage of the allocated time the student appears to be paying attention, and 3) success rate, or the percentage of answers the student got right.

If the student attends to reading only during the 20 or 30 minutes the teacher is conducting the reading group, not enough academic learning time occurs for any student. Meaningful seatwork activities are essential in order to extend the time at task. Brophy and Evertson (1976) highlight the importance of selecting seatwork with care. They observed and coded classroom behavior of second and third grade students and discovered to their surprise that apparent attention to the teacher's presentation of the lesson was unrelated to student learning, but apparent attention to seatwork was highly related to increased achievement test results. Brophy and Evertson concluded that even these beginning students had learned to smile while actually wool-gathering. When these same students were faced with responding to challenging but manageable worksheets or workbooks, socially acceptable body language was not enough.

Step III helps the committee to determine the amount of independent seatwork needed and to begin planning for classroom organization. Do this by listing available resource personnel and the services they can provide. Examine the list and write a summary statement.

Step III

What Resource Personnel Are Available?

Check available personnel and select letters that indicate services each can provide.

B,C,D	Other teachers	
A	Principal	help interpret achievement tests
	Reading specialist	
B,C,G	Title I teacher	will work with lowest 10% of students
	Team teacher	
	Curriculum consultant	
	Resource room teacher	
C,G	Speech pathologist	in our school ½ day per week
	Volunteer aides	
	Media specialist	
E	School psychologist	available on contract basis
	Other	
	Other	

Services:

A. Assessing current knowledge and skill level of students
B. Helping to select material for special students
C. Providing supplementary material for special students
D. Planning how to organize the classroom
E. Assisting with reducing behavior problems
F. Evaluating what the students have learned
G. Supplementary instruction

Summary Statement:

Our major resources are the Title I teacher and the rest of the staff. We need a strong evaluation component to assure that students are properly placed in the material.

We may need help with organizing the classroom and reducing behavior problems. We might consider in-service or faculty meetings on these topics.

Step IV. Which books meet our general needs?

Now that the committee has developed tentative conclusions about the age and background of the students to be taught, the minimum competencies mandated by the state or district boards, and the resource personnel who are available to help reach the goals, it is time to begin looking at possible books and reading series to serve the students. Which series will be selected? How can this decision be made? First, gain an overall impression of each potential textbook series through examining promotional literature, or through a quick examination of the materials and guides, or better yet, through examining program descriptions of the 24 most used elementary reading programs in Selector's Guide for Elementary School Reading Programs, Volume I (1977) and Volume II (1978).

Do select one series, or complete program, that will serve all teachers as the core instructional material for students through several consecutive grades. A well organized program from level to level provides smooth transitions and allows students to use what they have learned in previous years. Rogers (1970) applied a readability formula to 13 basal readers marked by the publisher as fourth grade level. When Rogers applied one standard of difficulty to these fourth grade texts he found they ranged from 2.8 to 6.0. Imagine the frustration of students and teachers if these books were used as if they were interchangeable just because they all bore fourth grade labels. In addition to insuring continuous growth through increasingly difficult books, selecting one series enables teachers to select a rationale that matches their students. For example, in Eisenhower Elementary 40 percent of all student scores fall within the bottom three stanines. These students, particularly, need a congruent program with much practice at each level. Programs that move quickly and emphasize creative application are not suitable

since only 10 percent of the students, in the upper three stanines, appear to have the wealth of concepts necessary for moving directly to extension of present skills. The major focus for Eisenhower teachers should be on those programs that seem to provide a structured approach. Furthermore, a quick perusal of introductory pages of the teacher's manuals will make clear that some programs' goals will not match this school. These programs can then be eliminated from the ones under consideration. Examples of first goals taken from actual programs illustrate the diversity available. 1) Decode the printed visual symbols into the spoken sounds they designate. 2) Present a positive cross section of life in our growing urban centers and teach students that people—whatever their skin color, social status, or economic position—think, feel and dream just as the reader does. 3) Develop the full potential of children through stories full of warmth, fun and reality.

Certainly, if only these three choices were available to the committee choosing books for Eisenhower Elementary, the first of the three should be examined in depth. Chall's (1967) synthesis of fifty years of research stresses the importance of an initial code emphasis, especially for slower students. One of the major findings of the Cooperative REsearch Program in Primary Reading Instruction (1968) was that linguistic and phonic/linguistic programs were generally superior to conventional meaning emphasis basals in terms of pupil achievement in word recognition and spelling at the end of grade two. Investigators for the Targeted Research in Reading (ERIC, ED 054 922) sponsored by the Right to Read effort concluded that we do know how to get practically all children past the initial stages of learning to read, by using a phonics first emphasis. The authors of this summary agree with Chall. Phonics as an initial emphasis does not mean phonics as a panacea. A more serious and as yet unresolved problem is how to teach students to comprehend

what they read. Nevertheless, an initial emphasis on teaching students to associate sounds with symbols and to use sound symbol associations in decoding leads to better reading in the primary grades.

Next, examine the scope and sequence to determine when and how elements of reading are taught. The most valuable way to get a measure of a method is to select one of the elements listed on the scope and sequence (short vowel /a/ for example, or determining the main idea) and follow this one element through the teacher's manual and the students' books, noting whether pretesting is recommended to identify students who already know that element. Note also whether the student is expected to use the element before receiving any instruction on it. Find whether one or many teaching procedures are recommended, and decide whether discovery learning or direct instruction is used. For example, in one series short vowel /a/ is taught first in lesson 95 near the end of the first year, although words using this sound have appeared since the first page of the first book. No suggestions appear in lesson 95 for determining which students have learned this sound/symbol association inductively in the preceding 94 lessons. Short vowel /a/ appears again in lessons 97, 102 and 106 in material recommended for the first year. Two teaching procedures are suggested: Having the student repeat words learned as sight words in which the sound appears in a medial position (cat, fat, fan, had, that) and having the students cut pictures from magazines. In addition, four workbook pages require the student to write in the correct vowel beneath pictured words, as in f_ _n.

Unquestionably this series is loosely structured. Elements are taught almost incidentally, making learning inductive. Teachers using this method must be prepared to find schemes of their own to determine which students already know how to use given elements of reading, and therefore do not need instruction. Teachers must also devise their own techniques to determine when

students have learned the elements taught. More direct teaching procedures are needed for those students who are unable to discover for themselves the intricacies of the English language code.

Selecting one decoding and one comprehension element and following them through the teacher's manuals and student books will take two hours or more of one person's time for each method considered. Each potential series need not be examined in this depth. Use this technique for those series that remain under consideration after the first impressions are gained. No other procedure yields such valuable information about a reading series. The reading series selected has a major impact on instruction. Barton and Wilder (1964) found that reading series and the teacher's manuals influence teachers more than college methods courses or practice teaching experience or articles in professional journals. Ninety-eight percent of first grade teachers and from 92 to 94 percent of second and third grade teachers reported using basal readers on all or most days of the year.

Step IV

Which Books Meet Our General Needs?

1. Name of method examined_____
2. Author's main first goal_____
3. Author's other stated goals_____
4. Reading element examined_____
5. What pretesting procedures are outlined?_____

   _____
6. Element being examined is taught in lessons No. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
7. Students use element first in lesson___and subsequently_____
8. Number of different teaching procedures recommended (briefly outline procedures)

   a._____

   b._____

   c._____
9. Kinds of independent activities suggested for this element. (briefly outline)

   a._____
10. Procedures for determining mastery (describe procedures)

    a._____

    b._____
11. Are the teaching and testing procedures in harmony with the author's stated goal? Yes___ No___
12. Summary statement describing method, with recommendation for possible adoption in our school.

Step V. Do the component parts assist with classroom organization?

Elementary reading programs of today differ from the single textbooks of yesteryear, and include word cards, workbooks, placement tests, management systems, filmstrips and audio cassettes. All these extras assist with total classroom organization. Teachers, rather than materials, will always be the main determiner of the number of classroom groups, the amount of drill, the immediacy of feedback, the degree of directness necessary and the time allocated to each subject area. Furthermore, the background and skill level of the students and the number of resource persons available influence which (of the many things teachers know how to do) applies to a given class. Obviously, skilled teachers can adapt almost any material to any classroom, if they devote hours to preparing supplementary worksheets, study guides, summaries, tests and interest activities. Finding a program with components that facilitate the match among students, books and necessary classroom organization makes much sense.

Before investigators actually began sitting in many classrooms and coding what teachers and students do, questions about classroom organization evoked only strong opinions. Often the opinions clashed head-on. Allow the students to discover answers, declared one authority. Provide direct and frequent feedback and correction, responded another. Run a democratic classroom. No, maintain firm teacher control. Encourage students to set their own goals. That's unproductive. Use diagnostic/prescriptive teaching. Teachers, confused by this din of conflicting ideas may have concluded that all theory was useless. They frequently discovered for themselves how to teach the students assigned to them, often relying on the wisdom of the experienced teachers in adjacent classrooms.

Fortunately, investigators are at last beginning to resolve these controversies by going into classrooms and recording what teachers say and do.

Many classroom teachers from all sections of the country participated in these studies. Investigators in Texas, California, Michigan, New York and Missouri each sponsored different observers using slightly different coding systems and different groups of students. Actual classroom events were then related to student achievement and student self-concept. Guidelines for teaching came from careful scientific analysis of these real life experiences, rather than from someone's notion of what ought to be. Furthermore, consistent conclusions emerged from all these different classroom observations. The investigators agree.

The rest of this section highlights four key points from this new knowledge. First, successful teaching is not simply a matter of implementing one best procedure; rather, effective teaching requires the ability to select from a large repertoire of assessment, instruction and managerial skills. A superior reading program expands the teacher's repertoire of skills. Second, children learn more when they are instructed in groups. The reading program should provide specific guidelines for flexible grouping of students. Third, direct instruction assists slow learning students or those just acquiring concepts, while guided discovery learning helps students apply learned concepts to new and creative situations. Teacher's manuals should provide suggestions for both direct instruction and guided discovery teaching techniques. Fourth, and most significant, student achievement is directly related to academic learning time or the time a student is actually working on concepts to be learned. The newest reading programs, with all the supplementary components, increase the time at task if the goals of each extra activity are clearly stated and if the teacher selects supplementary components to serve a particular purpose. Further discussion of each of the four points listed above follows in the next paragraphs with logical implications for selecting a reading

program. References at the end may entice the scholarly or the skeptical who want to examine the evidence themselves.

The first major theme runs through all the findings like a melody in a Bach chorale, repeated by each group of investigators with only minor variations. Teacher decisions determine the degree of student learning. The Michigan Cost Effectiveness Study (1976) found that students learned more when teachers, rather than students, selected materials to be used; when teachers choose a high degree of program organization; when teachers, rather than paraprofessionals, did the teaching; when teachers assumed responsibility for student learning rather than blaming the students or the parents.

Logically, then, teachers' manuals should have an index, a table of contents, and a cross-referenced section like the study guide or related topics portion of the best encyclopedias. Immediate access to the full range of activities to reach various goals enables the teacher to make important decisions quickly.

A second finding will surprise teachers steeped for years in the marinade of individualization. Children taught in groups learn more than children taught individually. Rosenshine (1976) found that grouping eight or more third graders for instruction produced more learning than having them work on individual assignments. Kiesling (1978) found that small and large group instruction was more effective than individual teaching by classroom teachers, reading specialists or paid paraprofessionals. Children in groups learn from each other. Children in groups also receive more minutes of instruction from the teacher.

Logically, then, the best reading programs should help teachers select groups of students for initial instruction, or for review, or for creative use of known concepts. Distinctly written goals with suggestions for pre-testing to determine which students have reached the goals would help teachers form

flexible groups. Criterion referenced tests keyed to lesson plans and practice activities also facilitate forming fluid groups.

Third, the new evidence highlights the value of direct instruction. Direct instruction means the teacher shows the students how to do the task, has the students respond, tells the students whether their responses are right or wrong and then has the students practice the new material. Gage (1978) summarizes many recent studies with a series of "teacher should" statements. Two of the eight statements clarify the direct instruction concept: 1) With less academically oriented pupils teachers should always aim at getting the child to give some kind of response. 2) During reading-group instruction, teachers should ask as many short answer questions as possible and provide fast-paced activities of the "drill" type. Brophy and Evertson (1976) found that when teachers corrected students in a matter of fact, business-like manner, the students learned more than when teachers refrained from telling students the answers were wrong.

Direct instruction is not the preferred teaching method for all students and all objectives. Aptitudes and Instructional Methods (1977), the comprehensive scholarly guide for matching student to teaching method, reiterates one major thesis. Students whose present skills are far from the desired goal, profit from small units of instruction, careful sequencing, guided practice and review. Students with a high level of previously acquired information, however, learn more under inductive teaching, or the guided discovery approach.

Logically, the ideal teacher's manual contains many suggestions for direct instruction in the primary grades and in the intermediate grades and suggestions for creative application appropriate for the able students, as well as suggestions for direct instruction for those students still gradually acquiring foundation skills.

The fourth major conclusion seems so obvious that authors usually apologize for discussing anything so patently evident. Students learn more if they stay at the task for longer periods of time. On the other hand, putting this simple principle into practice challenges the best teachers. Observers in the Beginning Teacher Evaluation Study (1978) found that less able fifth grade students actually received less, rather than more, instruction in reading than able fifth grade students in the same school. Nobody denies that carefully selecting activities of the right difficulty, as well as maintaining superb classroom organization, are needed to keep low achievers actively working for extended periods of time. Increased student learning is worth the effort. Bloom (1976) presents convincing evidence that differences in beginning performance can be substantially decreased by mastery teaching, that is, by making sure low achievers actually can use low level concepts before higher level ones are taught. Reading programs with varied and interesting seatwork components directly related to the main instructional goals assist teachers with organizing the class for mastery learning.

The points from Step V are summarized on the worksheet that follows. Examine the teacher's manual closely. Look for a table of contents, an index, and a cross-reference list to enable teachers to find the right teaching strategy for groups of students. Look for tests with suggestions for grouping students and matching them with the appropriate books. Follow one skill through several levels. Find out if both direct teaching and discovery learning suggestions are available to the teacher. Carefully examine the seatwork and supplementary components. Do they provide review of skills taught, creative application of learned concepts or mere busy work?

Step V

Do the Component Parts Assist With Classroom Organization?

Mark all that apply. Use one sheet for each method being considered.

1. Are the following available?

   ☐ Yes ☐ No Table of contents

   ☐ Yes ☐ No Index

   ☐ Yes ☐ No Cross-reference of activities and goals from all levels

2. Do the available table of contents, index and cross-reference guides actually provide ready access to activities to reach specific goals?

   ☐ Yes, across all difficulty levels

   ☐ Yes, within one difficulty level

   ☐ No, available but not functional. We can't find varied activities easily

   ☐ No, few actual teaching suggestions are available

3. Evaluation of tests.

   ☐ Tests are available and provide useful guidelines for forming groups and placing students in the right texts

   ☐ Tests are available but provide few guidelines for forming groups and placing students in the right texts

   ☐ Suggestions for teacher-made pretests are available for each goal

   ☐ Tests over this material are not available

4. Suggestions for direct instruction or discovery learning.

   A variety of direct instruction teaching techniques are outlined

   ☐ For primary

   ☐ For intermediate

   A variety of discovery learning suggestions are outlined

   ☐ For intermediate

Step V (continued):

5. Independent work suggestions are directly related to instructional goals.

   ▱ Primarily review of objectives taught

   ▱ Primarily creative application of previously taught concepts

   ▱ Independent work activities seem unrelated to objectives taught

6. Summary statement with recommendations for or against adoption of this series for our school.

Step VI. Which books should we adopt?

A committee will probably carry on the work of collecting pertinent facts about students to be taught and programs available to teach them. Individual committee members may collect different pieces of the necessary information. The committee as a whole should then review all the information on the students and summaries on the methods and select two—no more than three—methods that the committee decides are best for the student population. Re-examination of some portions of each series can be expected at this point in order to present an accurate picture of the method to the total staff. The main goals of the full staff discussion are to develop a sense of community among the staff, to inform them further about the characteristics of the total group of students to be taught, to introduce them to a method of selecting materials that is drawn from the most recent thinking on curriculum design and effective teaching, and finally, to allow the users to share in the selection of the reading method that will serve as the core curriculum across several consecutive grade levels.

Tentative conclusions reached by the committee should be shared with as many users as practical. The prior work of the committee will have eliminated unacceptable methods. The final two or three methods selected will probably meet most of the important criteria. In the full staff discussion the committee members should strive to give the whole staff a sense of ownership in the decision. In small schools all the teachers will probably be present at the final discussions. When one text is being selected for large school districts, representatives from each school should attend. Committee members will first explain the series of steps taken in order to reach the final choices. Share the findings on student background, student achievement, minimum requirements for graduation and resource people available by preparing

charts, handouts, or simply running the summary sheets from this guide onto an overhead projector transparency. Briefly describe all the methods examined and the reasons for excluding some. Have the final choices available for examination, and during the discussion of each reading program, give several examples of program goals, different teaching procedures recommended, independent activities provided and evaluation techniques suggested. Help the staff see the differences in the final choices.

The final adoption discussion is a time for cooperation among staff members as well as a time for sharing information about new programs to be selected and currently available materials that are compatible. Whether you are buying books, new clothes or new furniture, think first of what your needs are, next consider available choices and, finally, select the product that fills unmet needs. In each case the user who participates in the final selection will be more satisfied with the choice. If the selection committee members share in detail the process they followed to select two or three programs and then let the users make the final choice, the possibility of continued cooperation among the staff will be enhanced. Teachers will be apt to feel that the best new program was chosen.

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Step I

Background of Our Students

	Average family income	Percent of one-parent families
Our school	_____	_____
Our district	_____	_____
National average	_____	_____

	Percent of persons 18 years or older who have completed four years of high school	Percent of persons 25 years or older who have completed four years of college
Our school	_____	_____
Our district	_____	_____
National average	_____	_____

We will select books for grades _____

Tentative impressions gained from these facts.

Step II

What Do the Students Need to Be Taught?

When the students complete high school the minimum standards for reading include: (Write in several statements from goals adopted by your school)

1. _____

_____

2. _____

_____

3. _____

_____

4. _____

_____

Summaries of achievement test scores tell us our students (mark all that apply):

_____Are very much like the national average

_____Are lower than the national average

_____Are higher than the national average

_____Have more students at the middle range

_____Have more students at the low range

_____Have more students at the upper end

We should look for:

_____More practice and review items for the less able students

_____A method that provides direct instruction for the less able students

_____A method with high congruence between parts, each teaching the same skills with a little variation, for the less able students

_____Suggestions for innovative, creative tasks for the more able students

_____A method allowing easy access to more difficult material for the more able students

Step III

What Resource Personnel Are Available?

Check available personnel and select letters that indicate services each can provide.

_____	Other teachers	_____
_____	Principal	_____
_____	Reading specialist	_____
_____	Title I teacher	_____
_____	Team teacher	_____
_____	Curriculum consultant	_____
_____	Resource room teacher	_____
_____	Speech pathologist	_____
_____	Volunteer aides	_____
_____	Media specialist	_____
_____	School psychologist	_____
_____	Other	_____
_____	Other	_____

Services:

A. Assessing current knowledge and skill level of students
B. Helping to select material for special students
C. Providing supplementary material for special students
D. Planning how to organize the classroom
E. Assisting with reducing behavior problems
F. Evaluating what the students have learned
G. Supplementary instruction

Summary Statement:

Step IV

Which Books Meet Our General Needs?

1. Name of method examined _____
2. Author's main first goal _____
3. Author's other stated goals _____
4. Reading element examined _____
5. What pretesting procedures are outlined? _____

   _____
6. Element being examined is taught in lessons No. ___ ___ ___ ___ ___ ___
7. Students use element first in lesson ___ and subsequently _____
8. Number of different teaching procedures recommended (briefly outline procedures)

   a. _____

   b. _____

   c. _____
9. Kinds of independent activities suggested for this element. (briefly outline)

   a. _____
10. Procedures for determining mastery (describe procedures)

    a. _____

    b. _____
11. Are the teaching and testing procedures in harmony with the author's stated goal? Yes___ No___
12. Summary statement describing method, with recommendation for possible adoption in our school.

Step V

Do the Component Parts Assist With Classroom Organization?

Mark all that apply. Use one sheet for each method being considered.

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   ☐ Yes ☐ No Index

   ☐ Yes ☐ No Cross-reference of activities and goals from all levels

2. Do the available table of contents, index and cross-reference guides actually provide ready access to activities to reach specific goals?

   ☐ Yes, across all difficulty levels

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   ☐ For primary

   ☐ For intermediate

   A variety of discovery learning suggestions are outlined

   ☐ For intermediate

Step V (continued):

5. Independent work suggestions are directly related to instructional goals.

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   ▱ Primarily creative application of previously taught concepts

   ▱ Independent work activities seem unrelated to objectives taught

6. Summary statement with recommendations for or against adoption of this series for our school.